

Period 2: 1607-1754

AP United States History

Four Colonizers, Four Strategies

Period 2 runs from **1607** to **1754** - from Jamestown to the eve of the Seven Years' War. Its central question is why European colonies turned out so differently from one another.

Imperial goals, migration and local conditions helped shape different colonial patterns:

- **Spain** extracted wealth from the land, developing institutions built on **subjugating** native populations - the encomienda system carried over from Period 1.
- **France** and the **Netherlands** sent relatively few Europeans and relied on **trade alliances** with American Indians, especially in **fur**.
- **Britain** attracted a comparatively large number of **male and female migrants**, who came to settle and farm rather than only to extract.

Agricultural settlement increased British demand for Native land and contributed to displacement and conflict. This is a broad comparison, not a rule that British colonists never traded or made alliances. French, Dutch, British and Spanish colonies all formed alliances with Native groups; trade, cooperation and conflict could coexist. Native communities pursued their own diplomatic and economic goals.

EMPIRE	WHAT IT WANTED	TYPICAL PATTERNS
SPAIN	wealth extracted from the land	encomienda labour, a formal caste system
FRANCE & the NETHERLANDS	trade, above all in fur	few settlers, alliances and intermarriage with American Indians
BRITAIN	land to settle and farm	many male and female migrants, displacement, sustained conflict

Fur trading relied on Native partners; settlement increased land demand. **All four empires** also formed alliances with Native groups

Try it – explain the different strategies. These are teaching summaries, not historical quotations. A colony has few European settlers and depends on Native partners for furs. Another has many farming settlers seeking additional land. A third extracts resources through institutions that subjugate Native communities. Match the patterns to French/Dutch, British and Spanish colonization. Explain the link between each economic goal and its relationships; do not only name an empire.

Worked reasoning. French and Dutch fur exports relied on Native trading partners

and diplomatic relationships. British agricultural settlement increased demand for land and contributed to displacement and conflict. Spanish resource extraction relied on institutions that controlled Native labour and society, alongside conversion and other goals. These are patterns with variation, not complete accounts of every colony.

Transfer – test a universal claim. A student says, “Only French and Dutch colonists made Native alliances; British settlers never did.” Use the course evidence that all four empires allied with Native groups to explain why the claim fails. A British alliance does not erase land conflict, and a French trading alliance does not establish that French colonization was always peaceful. Identify the place, period and purpose before generalising.

The Regions of British Colonies

	New England	Middle colonies	Chesapeake	Southern coast and West Indies
Geography	cold, thin soil, short growing season	fertile, temperate	warm, long season, navigable rivers	long growing season, subtropical
Economy	mixed farming, fishing, shipping	cereal crops (the 'bread colonies')	tobacco	rice and sugar
Labour	family labour	family labour and indentured servants	servants; growing use of enslaved Africans	enslaved Africans, a majority in places
Society	Puritan towns, high life expectancy	most ethnically and religiously diverse	scattered plantations, high mortality	rigid racial hierarchy

Environment, markets, migration and law interacted

Regional patterns: environment, markets, migration and law interacted; no single factor determined society

British North America was not one place. Four regions developed distinct societies.

- The **Chesapeake** and **North Carolina** grew prosperous exporting **tobacco**, a labour-intensive crop. Labour came first from **indentured servants** and increasingly from enslaved Africans.
- The **New England** colonies, initially settled by **Puritans**, developed around small towns with **family farms**, a mixed economy, and unusually high life expectancy.
- The **middle colonies** supported a flourishing export economy based on **cereal crops**, and attracted the broadest range of European migrants, producing the most **ethnically and religiously diverse** region.

- The colonies of the **southern Atlantic coast** and the **British West Indies** used long growing seasons for **rice** and **sugar**, cash crops so labour-hungry that enslaved Africans became a majority of the population in places.

Try it – compare using evidence. Use the regional notes to compare the Chesapeake with New England. Name one economic difference, describe the labour patterns, then explain how the difference connects to production. Include a similarity: both regions took part in Atlantic commerce.

Worked comparison. The Chesapeake exported labour-intensive tobacco and increasingly relied on enslaved Africans after extensive use of indentured servants. New England combined family farming with fishing, shipping and commerce. Different production patterns helped shape different labour arrangements, while both regions participated in Atlantic markets. These are dominant patterns; they do not mean slavery was absent from New England or that all Chesapeake workers had the same status.

Transfer – qualify a causal claim. “Warm weather caused slavery, and geography determined society.” Explain one relevant environmental influence and two other factors. Long growing seasons supported some plantation crops, but export demand, migration, colonists’ coercive decisions and laws establishing racial and hereditary slavery also shaped labour systems. Climate did not require people to enslave others. All British colonies participated in slavery to varying degrees; say where slavery was more common, rather than claiming it was absent elsewhere.

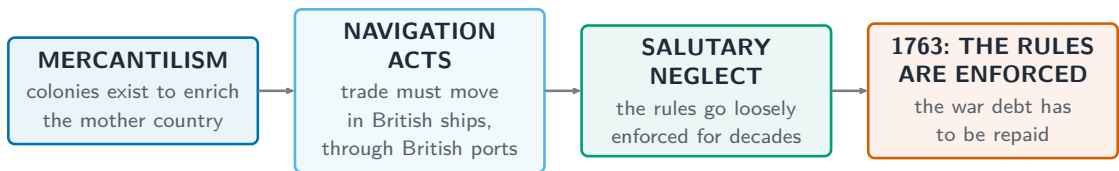
One political feature was shared. Distance from London, and Britain’s initially **lax attention**, let the colonies create **self-governing institutions** - colonial assemblies that later shaped resistance to imperial control.

Transatlantic Trade

An **Atlantic economy** developed in which goods - and enslaved Africans and American Indians - were exchanged around the ocean rim. Continuing trade increased the flow of goods in and out of American Indian communities, changing them too.

From the mid-seventeenth century, the British government tried to bring its colonies into a coherent imperial system, driven by **mercantilism** - the belief that colonies exist to enrich the mother country. The **Navigation Acts** required colonial trade to move in British ships through British ports.

Enforcement was loose for decades, a practice later called **salutary neglect**. Colonists grew used to trading freely and governing themselves, which is exactly why tightening the rules after 1763 provoked such anger.



In between, colonists grew used to **trading freely and governing themselves**. The anger of the 1760s is a reaction to the **change**, not to the laws — which were already a century old

Interactions with American Indians

Contact produced both **accommodation** and **conflict**, and the balance differed by empire and region.

Where trade mattered most - New France, the Dutch fur trade - alliances and intermarriage were common. Where land mattered most, conflict followed. British expansion led to sustained **military conflict** with American Indians over land, resources, and boundaries.

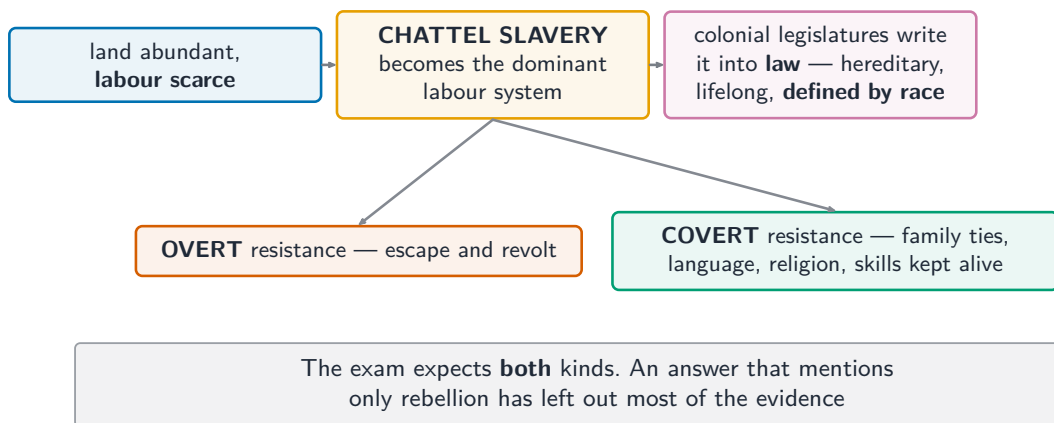
Resistance took organised forms. The **Pueblo Revolt** of 1680 drove the Spanish out of New Mexico for over a decade and forced lasting changes in Spanish policy - the clearest example in the course of native resistance succeeding.

Slavery in the British Colonies

All the British colonies participated in the **Atlantic slave trade** to varying degrees, because land was abundant and labour scarce.

As **chattel slavery** became the dominant labour system in many southern colonies, colonial legislatures wrote new laws creating a **strict racial system**. Slavery became hereditary, lifelong, and defined by race - a legal structure, not merely a practice.

Enslaved Africans developed **overt and covert means of resistance**: escape and revolt, and also the maintenance of family ties, languages, religious practices, and skills. The exam expects both kinds; an answer that mentions only rebellion misses most of the evidence.



Colonial Society and Culture

Two opposite processes ran at once.

Toward **diversity**: the presence of different European religious and ethnic groups produced a significant degree of **pluralism**, most visibly in the middle colonies.

Toward **similarity**: the colonies experienced a gradual **Anglicization**, adopting British goods, print culture, legal norms, and political ideas even as they developed autonomous political communities.

Transatlantic exchange also brought the **Enlightenment** and, in the 1730s and 1740s, the religious revivals of the **First Great Awakening**, which encouraged colonists to question established authority - religious first, political later.

The goals of European leaders and colonists increasingly **diverged**, and colonists' resistance to imperial control drew on local experience of self-government and evolving ideas about rights.

Comparison in Period 2

The unit ends with **comparison**, the reasoning skill this period is built to teach: the regions differ enough that almost any claim about “the colonies” needs qualifying.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2025 exam asked, as part A of a short-answer question, “*Briefly describe one political development in British North America from 1607 to 1753.*” A teacher-written response consistent with the official 2025 Set 1 Question 3(A) scheme describes a development and its relevant characteristics: “*Colonial assemblies such as the Virginia House of Burgesses developed powers over taxation and spending, which gave colonists practical experience of representative self-government before 1754.*” Notice the shape: **Briefly describe** requires relevant characteristics, more than an isolated term. This model describes what assemblies did; a name alone is insufficient. Marks are lost here by writing too much about the

wrong thing, or by staying vague (“colonies became more independent”).

Exam tips

- Explain regional differences through interacting factors: environment, export demand, migration, labour choices and law. Geography alone did not determine society.
- Never treat “the colonies” as one place. A comparison question wants New England *against* the Chesapeake, with evidence from each.
- **Mercantilism** is the theory, the **Navigation Acts** are the policy, and **salutary neglect** is the lax enforcement that made later enforcement feel like tyranny.
- For slavery, give **both** overt and covert resistance; and note that slave codes made slavery *racial and hereditary*, which is the change being tested.
- The **Pueblo Revolt** is the go-to example of successful native resistance; British-Indian conflict is the go-to contrast with French trade alliances.
- Match your answer to the task verb. **Briefly describe** takes one or two accurate sentences, while **Evaluate the extent** needs a thesis that takes a position.

Grounding. CED Topics 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6 support these comparisons and qualifications. The exam-linked response is checked against the official 2025 Set 1 Question 3(A) paper and scheme (local paper PDF5, scheme PDF6); it is a teacher-written model, not an official sample.

Vocabulary card meanings

subjugating: Bringing a people under another power’s control. trade alliances: Partnerships built around exchanging goods, especially furs. fur: Animal pelts that were a major export from North America. male and female migrants: Colonists who arrived as both men and women, affecting family settlement. Chesapeake: The bay region of Virginia and Maryland, centred on tobacco. tobacco: The cash crop that anchored the early Chesapeake economy. indentured servants: People who worked for a term of years in exchange for passage. Puritans: English Protestants who founded New England communities with strict religious aims. family farms: Small holdings worked by a household, typical of New England. cereal crops: Grains such as wheat grown for sale in the middle colonies. ethnically and religiously diverse: Containing many peoples and faiths, as in the middle colonies. rice: A grain grown on coastal plantations in the Lower South. sugar: The sweet substance made from cane on Caribbean plantations that used enslaved labour. lax attention: Loose imperial supervision of the colonies for long periods. self-governing institutions: Colonial assemblies that made local laws and raised taxes. Atlantic economy: The linked trade in goods and enslaved people around the ocean. Navigation Acts: English laws that channelled colonial trade through English ships and ports. salutary neglect: Britain’s loose enforcement of trade laws while it still benefited. military conflict: Wars among empires and with Indigenous nations in North America. strict racial system: Laws and customs that fixed status by race, especially around slavery. pluralism: The presence of many religious or ethnic groups

side by side. First Great Awakening: A wave of emotional Protestant revival in the colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. diverged: Grew apart, as colonial and British interests did.